

The Criminal Trial Division of the First Judicial District is instituting several new policies and procedures regarding scheduling and processing of criminal court matters to maximize judicial economy and utility of court resources. The new items are listed below:

Advanced Review and Consolidation Program (ARC)

On March 2, 2009, the Criminal Trial Division of the First Judicial District will institute a new criminal case review program called Advanced Review and Consolidation (ARC). This program will expand criminal case management by examining all of the defendants' open matters as a group. This program will also reduce the time to disposition of active Common Pleas Court and Municipal Court criminal cases and will save valuable counsel time. Court Administration will schedule defendants' open cases with their Common Pleas Court probation/parole hearings and or with their other open cases on the Common Pleas Court Formal Arraignment list. The defendants would thereby have an opportunity to consolidate their open cases and dispose of their matters at one time. The success of these listings will greatly reduce the defendants' time to trial in many cases and would decrease the cases on many trial and pre-trial lists. This will allow trial judges to focus more on trial matters. This would also centralize the defendants' probation/parole cases with fewer if not one judge.

Accelerated Violation of Probation Program (AVOPP)

Beginning March 11, 2009, the Court of Common Pleas will implement a new post trial courtroom designed to expedite non-custody technical violation of probation hearings. This program will be called Accelerated Violation of Probation Program (AVOPP). The Adult Probation and Parole Department will identify non-custody defendants with technical violations from both the Court of Common Pleas and Municipal Court. These technical violations may include non-reporting, lack of employment, lack of drug or mental health treatment, arrears, electronic monitoring violation or violation of any other condition of probation/parole not including an arrest or a direct violation. These cases will be listed within 10 days in Courtroom 905 CJC before the Honorable Joan Brown who is the judge assigned to this program.

The AVOPP Judge will conduct the technical violation hearings and address the confirmed infraction(s) or may schedule the matter before the sentencing judge. The matters will remain under the jurisdiction of the sentencing judge pending the outcome of the hearing. If the AVOPP judge revokes probation, the AVOPP judge will assume jurisdiction. If probation is continued, the sentencing judge will retain jurisdiction. The sentencing judge, defense counsel and the District Attorney's Office reserve the right to object to the AVOPP hearing. The goal of this program is to enhance the monitoring of probation/parole cases, through early review by the AVOPP judge. This will result in the removal of technical violation of probation hearings from judicial dockets allowing judges to focus primarily on trials scheduled before them.

Reassignment of Probation/Parole cases of judges who do not sit in the Criminal Justice Center

Effective February 2009, all Common Pleas Court Civil and Family Court judges and Municipal Court judges not sitting in the Criminal Justice Center but maintaining an inventory of probation/parole cases would relinquish jurisdiction for the purposes of a conducting a violation of probation/parole hearing. Upon receiving the hearing request, Court Administration will examine the defendants' criminal history to determine to whom the case/cases should be reassigned. If the defendant is currently on the probation/parole of a judge currently assigned to the Criminal Justice Center, the violation case/cases would be reassigned and scheduled before that judge. If the defendant is not currently on probation/parole of any judge currently assigned to the Criminal Justice Center, the case/cases would be reassigned and scheduled before the AVOPP judge. This would alleviate reserving courtrooms in the CJC for Civil and Family Court judges and assigning the requisite staff. It would also expedite hearings since these matters are only scheduled once a month.

BY THE COURT:

HONORABLE D. WEBSTER KEOGH
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE, TRIAL DIVISION

HONORABLE PAMELA PRYOR DEMBE
PRESIDENT JUDGE, COMMON PLEAS COURT

HONORABLE MARSHA H. NEIFIELD
PRESIDENT JUDGE, MUNICIPAL COURT

HONORABLE SHEILA WOODS-SKIPPER
SUPERVISING JUDGE
CRIMINAL TRIAL DIVISION, COMMON PLEAS COURT